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SUBJECT: MFA SECSTATE KAO KIM HOURN DISCUSSES BURMA WITH  
DAS MARCIEL

REF: PHNOM PENH 74

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Deputy Assistant Secretary Scot Marciel paid a courtesy call January 18 on Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary of State in charge of ASEAN Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conversation focused on ASEAN and the situation in Burma. Kao Kim Hourn offered his candid perceptions of the current situation in Burma, noting Aung Sang Suu Kyi should be treated as a partner in an inclusive process that proceeds on a defined timeline --which could perhaps evolve from the roadmap. Noting that more dialogue should be pursued, he said Cambodia could serve as a model as it had experience making a transition from conflict. DAS Marciel stressed the need for Cambodia and other neighbors to press the Burmese regime to welcome UN advisor Gambari and to move toward a genuine dialogue. The Deputy Chief of Mission, Control Officer Jennifer Spande, and SGSO Judy Moore (notetaker) accompanied DAS Marciel. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Kao Kim Hourn outlined the Cambodian process for ratification of the ASEAN Charter, which will soon commence in the National Assembly. He said the cabinet endorses the charter and expects Cambodia to be the second or third country to ratify it.

¶3. (U) Kao Kim Hourn stated that Cambodia's position on the proposed ASEAN human rights body had been established by Prime Minister Hun Sen in late 2006: Cambodia supported national human rights bodies and would create one of its own, and Cambodia supported creation of an ASEAN human rights body. He noted potential difficulty in defining powers granted the human rights body and distinguishing the respective roles of the ASEAN body and national human rights commission.

Burma - Situation Complicated  
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¶4. (SBU) Kao Kim Hourn recognized the lack of progress in Burma's political situation. He said that the Cambodian role is not an easy one, but perhaps Cambodia could act as a model of how to progress for Burma. While the ongoing process (the roadmap) should be respected, there must be a timeline for moving forward. He also said that the process must be inclusive and that Aung San Suu Kyi should be treated as a partner.

¶5. (SBU) DAS Marciel reiterated that the U. S. does not want instability in Burma, and that without political change the present situation could get worse. He said that Aung San Suu Kyi cannot represent others when she herself remains in isolation. He emphasized that ASEAN nations must weigh in

with the regime to press for approval of an early visit by UN envoy Gambari and for tangible progress toward a genuine dialogue.

¶16. (SBU) Kao Kim Hourn pointed out that elections are key to the democratic process. He offered his personal idea of finding a way forward for Burma through an international conference styled on the Paris Peace process for Cambodia, also pulling in countries such as China and India which were supportive of the regime. He suggested that one or more ASEAN representatives might visit Burma to evaluate the current situation. Kao Kim Hourn intimated one area of concern is that other governments, views are not being conveyed by Burmese officials to General Than Shwe.

¶17. (SBU) Kao Kim Hourn also proposed the notion of future political asylum or exile for General Than Shwe as a means to allow the process to move forward. He acknowledged that Cambodia, as one of the newer ASEAN members, has relatively close ties to Burma. He reiterated that elections are key to moving toward democracy and indicated holding elections is the only way to overcome the perception that a country lacks international legitimacy.

¶18. (SBU) DAS Marciel cleared this cable.  
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